

Private Fostering Awareness

Do you know a child being looked after by someone who is not a close relative?

It could be a private fostering arrangement.

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Bromley Private Fostering Annual Report 2020-2021



"By working together with partner agencies, we will ensure that every child in Bromley has the right help at the right time to keep them safe and to meet their needs, so that they achieve, thrive and reach their full potential."

Transforming Bromley to Deliver Better Outcomes for Children and Families (2020)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This annual report provides a self-evaluation of London Borough of Bromley's (LBB) practice against The Children Private Fostering Arrangements for Fostering Regulations 2005. The report also gives details of the circumstances of children identified as Privately Fostered.
- 1.2 There were 17 notifications in the year 2020-2021. There had been a further eight arrangements which LBB had received notifications about in the previous year. The total number of private fostering arrangements during the year 2020-2021 were 25.

2. BROMLEY'S PRIVATE FOSTERING STANDARDS

Standard 1 – Statement on Private Fostering

The Local Authority has a written statement or plan, which sets out its duties and functions in relation to Private Fostering and the ways in which they will be carried out.

- 2.1 Bromley's Children's Services Statement of Purpose on Private Fostering sets out the following:
- Definition of a Privately Fostered Child
 - The Local Authority's Duties and Functions under the Children Act 1989 and Regulations
 - The Children Act 2004 and the Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations 2005
 - Promotion of Public and Professional Awareness
 - Assessment of Suitability of Private Fostering Arrangements
 - Advice and Information for Carers, Parents and Children
 - The Role of other Agencies in Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Privately Fostered Children
 - Staff Training.

Standard 2 – Notification

The Local Authority:

- **promotes awareness of the notification requirements and ensures that those professionals who may come into contact with privately fostered children understand their role in notification;**
- **responds effectively to notification; and**
- **deals with situations where an arrangement comes to their attention, which has not been notified.**

- 2.2 A program of awareness raising was completed within the stakeholder community in 2020-2021. This included linking with education, health, children's centres,

housing, voluntary and faith organisations. Training around identification and response to private fostering arrangements has been delivered as part of multi-agency safeguarding board training and designated safeguarding lead training.

- 2.3** The referral pathway in Bromley is clear; the MASH team immediately transfer such cases to the Permanency Service, Fostering team for an initial assessment within 7 days to ensure the child is being appropriately cared for. Partner agencies have been given the clear message that they should notify our MASH of a private fostering arrangement when they become aware of it and that they should make it clear that the reason they are referring is private fostering.
- 2.4** Information and leaflets on Private Fostering for parents, carers and professionals are available on the *Bromley council's website*, the *Bromley Safeguarding Children Partnership website* and, in the Bromley, *Private Fostering App*.

Standard 3 – Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare

The Local Authority determines effectively the suitability of all aspects of the Private Fostering arrangement in accordance with the regulations.

- 2.5** Through undertaking the Private Fostering assessment, the social worker establishes the suitability of the placement/proposed placement of carers. This includes the assessment of:
- The intended duration of the private fostering arrangement and that this is understood and agreed between the parent and private foster carer.
 - The ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child about the proposed/actual private fostering arrangement.
 - That the child's physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development is appropriate and satisfactory (once the private fostering arrangement has begun).
 - That the child's needs arising from faith, race, culture and language are being met.
 - That the financial arrangements for the care and maintenance of the child have been agreed between the parents and private foster carer.
 - The capacity of the proposed/actual foster carer to look after the child, and the suitability of members of their household and premises (including whether the private foster carer or anyone in the household is disqualified from privately fostering children).
 - That consideration has been given, and necessary steps taken to make arrangements for the care of the child's health; and that, once the private fostering arrangement has begun, these arrangements are in place and, in particular, that the child is registered with a G.P.
 - That consideration has been given, and necessary steps taken to make arrangements for the child's education; and that, once the private fostering arrangement has begun, these arrangements are in place.
 - The standard of care provided for each privately fostered child.
 - Whether the contact arrangements have been agreed and understood and will

be/are satisfactory for the child.

- How decisions about the child's day to day care will be/are taken.

2.6 There is a workflow which social workers can access to provide them with clear direction in relation to completing the assessment. The social worker undertakes a DBS check of the private foster carer and anyone else over 18 years old living in the household where the child will reside.

2.7 All private fostering assessments are signed off at team management level and Private fostering arrangements tracked through performance digests at Group manager and Head of Service level.

Standard 4-6 – Advice and Support

The Local Authority provides such advice and support to private foster carers and prospective private foster carers as appears to the authority to be needed.

Children who are privately fostered are able to access information and support when required so that their welfare is safeguarded and promoted. Privately fostered children are enabled to participate in decisions about their lives.

The Local Authority provides advice and support to the parents of children who are privately fostered with in their area as appears to the authority to be needed.

2.8 Information and Support for Privately Fostered Children:

The council have developed information available specifically for privately fostered children, which explains about the private fostering situation, the role and responsibilities of the carer, the child's rights and the involvement and support offered by the Local Authority. This guidance is written in an easily accessible format and is available online and hardcopies.

2.9 The social worker provides the privately fostered child, appropriate to their age, with their contact details on their first visit with the child and encourages the child to contact them as they wish. The social worker also speaks to the child about private fostering to gain their views on the private fostering arrangement and their wishes and feelings regularly.

2.10 Advice and Support for Private Foster Carers:

On the first meeting the social worker provides the private foster carer with written guidance and advice that has been specifically developed for them. This includes information on what private fostering is, why and how the Local Authority is involved and the support that is available to them through the Local Authority.

2.11 The social worker also provides the Private Foster carer with their and team's contact details and out of hours emergency contacts as well as information relating to their entitlement to child and other financial benefits and any other necessary advice and support which will assist them in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child.

2.12 Private Foster carers are eligible to access parenting courses and other resources made available through the council's Early help service.

2.13 Advice and Support for Parents:

As part of the Private Fostering assessment, the social worker will consider all support and placement options for the child, parent/s, carer/s, including the need for the arrangement itself to take place and whether support can be provided to enable the child to live with his/her parent/s instead.

2.14 The social worker has a duty to contact the parents within 7 days of receiving the notification and will provide them with written guidance, specifically developed for parents, which explains the criteria for Private Fostering, the involvement and duty of Council's services and the support available for them to access. Should the Private Fostering arrangement be assessed as not appropriate for the child, the parents will be informed and guided as needed to make other arrangements.

2.15 The social worker provides the parents with their contact details and will remain in regular contact throughout the arrangement.

Standard 7 – Monitoring Compliance with Duties and Functions in relation to Private Fostering
The Local Authority has in place and implements effectively a system for monitoring the way in which it discharges its duties and functions in relation to private fostering. It improves practice where this is indicated as necessary by the monitoring system.

2.16 The council maintain confidential records of all privately fostered children, their carers and their parents on the electronic record of the child's file. Any visits, actions, decisions and information regarding the child, carers and parents are inputted onto the electronic system by the relevant involved professional.

2.17 The management group in the Permanency service monitor the number of Privately Fostered children within the Local Authority to ensure that children are being visited regularly and within statutory timescale and that children are safeguarded and their wellbeing is promoted and monitored.

2.18 Our Private fostering team is now part of the Private Fostering Practice Network run by CoramBAAF for private fostering practitioners nationally. We are also part of a virtual practitioner forum where ad-hoc information and informal support is exchanged on Private fostering practice issues. This is again a national forum.

3. OVERVIEW OF PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN IN BROMLEY

3.1 Private Fostering cases, assessments and visits are monitored. All private fostering cases are supervised and tracked at management level to ensure that these children are safeguarded and parents and carers receive adequate information and guidance.

3.2 The data below illustrates the private fostering activity for the year 2020-2021.

1	Number of active/open PF arrangements at 31 March 2020	8
2	Number of new notifications received During 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021	17* <i>*15 of these notifications were made retrospectively, 3 of them being for PF arrangements that had already started in the previous financial year</i>
3	Source of new notifications	
	<i>International school</i>	10
	<i>Social Care departments (Bromley, Lambeth, Cornwall, Nottinghamshire)</i>	5
	<i>Primary school</i>	1
	<i>Community / Parents</i>	1
5.	Number of children in PF arrangements during 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021	25 (17 new and 8 from previous year)
6.	Number of PF arrangements closed during 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021	21
7.	Outcome / Reason for closure	
	<i>Section 20 / Transfer to other teams in Bromley</i>	3
	<i>Child returned to parents or close relative in the UK</i>	5
	<i>Child returned to parents or close relative overseas</i>	3
	<i>Child turned 16</i>	2
	<i>Child returned to Boarding school after lockdown</i>	6
	<i>Criteria not met as child living with close relative</i>	1
	<i>Care transferred to another Local Authority</i>	1
8.	Number of active/open PF arrangements at 31st March 2021	4

3.3 The ages of children at point of point of notification ranged between 6-15 years.

3.4 The table below illustrates the ethnicity of the children in private fostering

arrangements during 2020-2021

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S PRIVATE FOSTERING ACTIVITY

- 4.1** Continued quality assurance of privately fostered children by the management group to ensure regular visiting to these children and thorough assessments and that children in private fostering arrangements in Bromley are safeguarded and their wellbeing promoted.
- 4.2** The service will continue to include Private Fostering as a compulsory element to safeguarding training offer and ensure any updates in legislation and procedures are incorporated, as a compulsory element to the training, ensuring new staff are provided with this training and current staff receive refresher training.
- 4.3** The management team will continue to review our private fostering processes to ensure good practice in the field is embedded in our service to privately fostered children and their carers.
- 4.4** The service will continue with ongoing awareness campaigning in the community and within the multi-agency groups.
- 4.5** Bromley Private Fostering will continue to contribute to the learning and improving practice within the practitioner's groups locally and nationally.

Date of report: 03/11/2021

Report completed by:

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